

The School Board Corner

By Robert Belman, Falmouth District
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Please take note: SLOW DOWN!

This was not my intended article for this month's School Board Corner. As most of you know I would rather write about baseball, the Red Sox, our great schools, programs, students, and staff; but today I feel compelled to change my article and write the following that needs to be read by all parents and students.

I travel the roads of Stafford quite a bit. One thing I have noticed is that there are more and more young drivers. I see them in the mornings, afternoons and nights. I see them around the schools, on the back roads of Stafford and on the highways- in all kinds of weather.

I see these young drivers speeding and tailgating, with heads and bodies keeping beat with music. All too often, I can hear the music they are listening to, as well above the volume of my own radio. They are often talking to friends, and/or talking on a cell phone, weaving in and out of traffic, and seem to be in a hurry to get somewhere. If I could only just get their attention long enough to say, "SLOW DOWN you are not invincible," I would.

Before you call or e-mail me; let me say I am not suggesting or implying, that all young drivers are reckless or that all reckless drivers are young. What I am saying is that the young drivers are out there- more and more it seems every day. Stafford was once a rural county with rural roads. As our county population density grows, our roads lag behind and stay rural, so the chances of car accidents increasing are seemingly exponential.

Recently, on my way home, I again had the "pleasure" of having a young driver with a high school parking pass still hanging from her mirror, tailgate me until she got the opportunity to pass, only to "tailgate" another vehicle in front of her, all the while talking on a cell phone. I hope and pray that she got home okay. This inexperienced young driver is the reason I am compelled to write this article.

We as parents- and yes I have an 18-year-old driver, as well as, a soon to be 15-year-old, who is anxious to "get behind the wheel"; need to be aware of our children and their modern-day potential driving habits. I do not need to quote statistics about fatalities and or accidents on our roads. I ask that the next time you go out, please notice those drivers on the road. I also ask that you take time to sit down with your child to remind them how precious they are, and to remind them to drive with extra care. The last thing we ever want to do is tell a parent how sorry we are for their loss.

I only need to ask you, the young driver, to slow down and enjoy the ride and have the opportunity to be a driver for a long time.

We all know that driving is a state-given privilege, not a right. You as a driver, must not abuse that privilege. We have an obligation as a society to protect our children, to let them know that we care about them and give them the opportunity to grow up to be adults. Talk with your child, meet with your friends and neighbors to make sure that our children, (YES, you students are still children), are obeying the rules of the road.

Spring is coming and thoughts are focusing, for some students, to graduation, summer time, getting out of school, and starting the next phase of life. I know because I was there too, and so were all these kids' parents... "many years ago" as our kids would surely remind us. Kids: PLEASE make sure you get the chance to graduate! Make sure your friends get the chance, too- DO NOT BECOME a statistic!

Webster defines ACCIDENT as 1. "Anything that happens unexpectedly, undesignedly, or without known cause. 2. Any unpleasant or unfortunate occurrence involving injury, loss, suffering or death."

No one gets behind the wheel of a vehicle with the intent of hurting themselves or someone else, that's why it is called an "accident", but by driving recklessly you are increasing the chance of being involved in an accident. This message is not about getting a traffic ticket, it is about STAYING ALIVE.

PLEASE SLOW DOWN-- PAY ATTENTION and grow up to pass along this same message to the next generation.

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